

Creative Ministry
MS 3XR3/6XR6
Fall Semester 2015
(CC/CW/PS)

***Those taking the course for PhD or MA credit will develop a syllabus in consultation with the instructor that will accommodate specific requirements of those programs and the students needs.**

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Class Time: Hybrid Course
Class Dates: TBA
Location: MDC (room #TBA)

Course Description

The Canadian church today exists in the midst of a cultural revolution that has dislocated it from its place as a shaper of culture, to one on the margins of culture. What impact does that have on the work of Christian Ministry? What is the role of the ministry leader in the contemporary church? What are the key practices of ministry that need to be undertaken? How do we cultivate Christian communities that can effectively engage the realities of our cultural context? This course will explore these questions by inviting students to consider the realities of Canadian culture and its effect on the church, as well as, some of the concrete ministry practices that can help the church to live into its identity as a set a part people. This course will seek to help students understand the primacy of forming communities that incarnate the ministry of Christ in their own specific context. Special attention will be paid to the kind of characteristics that are necessary in forming a missional community for 21st century Canada.

Course Objectives

Knowing:

- To help students understand the importance of the identity of the church and the nature of it's calling for contemporary ministry.
- To help students learn how to read their context and the importance of that discipline to the work of Christian ministry.
- To help students wrestle with their own philosophy of ministry and what they think is the best approach to making disciples within the realities of the current Canadian context.

Being:

- To develop awareness of spiritual identity and personal spiritual formation as foundational aspects of ministerial leadership.
- To contribute to the students understanding and development of their identity and philosophy of ministry as a ministering person.

Doing:

- Help students develop the ability to lead teams/congregations in the process of defining their corporate identity and ministry calling.
- In association with their current ministry contexts help students identify and begin to acquire foundational skills and vision relevant to pastoral ministry and congregational leadership.

Course Outline:

Section One: Where are We?

- This section of the course will take place during the first four weeks, primarily online. It will explore the need for and the challenge of contextualized ministry by considering the actual place of the church in Canada today, as well as, the theory of contextualization.

Section Two: What is our Response?

- This section of the course will take place primarily during the in-class section of the course where we will explore a variety of trends that are currently taking place in the Canadian church that are both theological as well as methodological responses to the changing cultural realities that the church finds itself in today.

Section Three: How do we Discern our Future?

- This section of the course will take place online throughout the concluding weeks of the course and will invite the class to explore how to discern appropriate approaches to creative ministry in the Canadian context today.

Course Textbooks

Diana Butler Bass; *Christianity After Religion: The End of Church and the Birth of a New Spiritual Awakening*. New York: Harper One, 2012.

John Bowen (editor), *Green Shoots out of Dry Ground: Growing a New Future for the Church in Canada*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2013.

Ruth Haley Barton; *Pursuing God's Will Together: A Discernment Practice For Leadership Groups*. Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 2012.

*** All required textbooks for this class are available from the College's book service, READ On Bookstore, Room 145, McMaster Divinity College. Texts may be purchased on the first day of class. For advance purchase, you may contact READ On Bookstore, 304 The East Mall, Suite 100, Etobicoke, ON M9C 5K1: phone 416.620.2934; fax 416.622.2308; email books@readon.ca. Other book services may also carry the texts.*

Course Requirements

1. Book Response #1

Write a response to Diana Butler Bass's *Christianity After Religion*. The paper should include a brief overview of the book's contents and main ideas, but the primary focus of the paper should be on your interaction with and response to Bass's ideas. How does what she writes resonate with your own impressions of the current Canadian context? Where does your experience differ from what she presents in the book? How do you feel about her overall conclusions about the direction of Christianity? What suggestions or corrections would you offer that may enhance or correct her presentation? Your paper should demonstrate engagement with some (but not necessarily all) of Bass's ideas in the book and also offer reflection on how the book may be helpful in assessing the current cultural context that we do Christian ministry in. Please be sure to cite specific ideas from the book in your response. For this assignment footnotes are not necessary when quoting from Bass's book. In that case you can simply use page references in brackets (e.g. (p. 34)). However, if you cite other sources footnotes are necessary.

The paper will be due Oct. 9, 2015. It should be 7-8 double spaced pages and will constitute 20% of the course grade.

2. Specialization Assignment (choose the one that is applicable to your specialization)

This assignment is based on the specialization that you have chosen for this course. You must choose the one that applies to your specialization.

a. Church and Culture

Those taking the course as a "church in culture" specialization will be asked to prepare a contextual assessment of a specific ministry context that you have some participation in. This assessment should function on two levels; first on the level of the community as a whole (i.e. the town, city, campus, section of town, etc. where your ministry context resides) and also on the level of your Christian community that exists in this broader context (i.e. this could be your home church, your para-church ministry, your placement context, etc.) The goal of this assignment is to help you develop the skill of reading and discerning a ministry context and understanding the implications of this context to develop a vision of how you do ministry in that context. The assignment should address (but is not limited to) the following questions:

- describe the people in this context (age, income, education, tastes, habits, etc.) How does your Christian community match up with or differ from the broader context on these issues?
- what are the challenges of this context? Both in terms of reaching out to the local community and/or the internal challenges of the church/Christian community?
- How does this context reflect (or not) the broader social changes that have been occurring in Canada over the past number of decades?
- what are the surroundings and environment like (i.e. in the broader ministry context)?
- what is the predominant worldview of the people in these contexts?

- how do these contexts influence the people who live in them?
- what kind of opportunities for ministry does this context offer, both in terms of mission in the broader community and ministry within the church/Christian community?
- How should this context influence how ministry should be done in terms of effective approaches?

The assignment will be due on Nov. 20, 2015. It should be 8-10 double spaced pages and will constitute 30% of the course grade.

b. Christian Worldview

Those taking the course as a specialization in Christian worldview will be asked to write an essay that analyzes the factors that have contributed to the shifting of the prevailing Canadian/Western worldview from one that was predominantly Judeo-Christian to one that is increasingly secular. Attention should be paid to specific ideologies and cultural developments that emerged throughout the twentieth century (though they may have begun earlier than the twentieth century), and how they began to challenge and displace more traditional foundations of worldview. The paper should conclude with a sketch of what might be properly understood as the prevailing worldview of Canadian culture today. Thus, the paper should move in three stages, a brief description of a traditional Canadian worldview, an analysis of the major factors that have led to a shifting worldview among many Canadians and a description of what can be (in general terms) described as the prevailing worldview of the majority of Canadians today.

The assignment will be due on Nov. 20, 2015. It should be 8-10 double spaced pages and will constitute 30% of the course grade.

c. Pastoral Studies

Write a response to Ruth Haley Barton's *Pursuing God's Will Together*. The paper should include a brief overview of the book's contents and main ideas, but the primary focus of the paper should be on your interaction with and response to Barton's ideas. How does what she writes resonate with you? Where does your experience differ from what she presents in the book? How do you feel about the overall direction and content of the book? What suggestions or corrections would you offer that may enhance or correct her presentation? Your paper should demonstrate engagement with some (but not necessarily all) of Barton's ideas in the book and also offer reflection on how the book may be helpful in the work of leading a congregation in discerning how God is at work in your context and how he may be leading you? In other words, the paper should reflect attention to how a pastoral leader can help develop a discernment process for their congregation. Please be sure to cite specific ideas from the book in your response. For this assignment footnotes are not necessary when quoting from Haley-Barton's book. In that case you can simply use page references in brackets (e.g. (p. 112)). However, if you cite other sources footnotes are necessary.

The assignment will be due on Nov. 20, 2015. It should be 8-10 double spaced pages and will constitute 30% of the course grade.

3. Summary Paper

This paper should offer a reflection on the primary contours of the course and interact closely with your own ideas on the three primary questions that the course will cover; What is our context in Canada today (and perhaps more specifically what is your own context?)?, What is the church called to do?, and How can the church accomplish its calling effectively? The paper should include interaction with all three course texts, course content and several other sources that address these particular issues. This assignment is designed to give you opportunity to synthesize your own thinking about the ideas that we have discussed in class and offer your own reflection on how they relate to your ministry in whatever shape that it takes both now and in the future.

The paper should be 10-12 pages (double spaced) and is due on Friday Dec. 11th, 2015. This assignment will constitute 30% of the course grade.

4. Class Participation

As a hybrid course this class will include an ongoing component of online interaction. Online lectures and presentations will ask for feedback and invite response. Online discussion (to varying extents) will be a regular requirement. Also, during the two days that we are together on campus class discussion will be an important part of our time together. Of particular note, one week we will focus directly on the course text, *Green Shoots out of Dry Ground: Growing a New Future for the Church in Canada*. The guided interaction around this text will be an important part of our online discussion and will play a significant role in the evaluation of the overall participation grade. Thus, student participation is of great importance and will constitute a significant portion of the course grade.

Class participation will constitute 20% of the course grade.

Further information

A core value of our class is that it is a “learning community,” designed to be a place where each member of the community can grow through positive affirmation and constructive input. We should all come to the community as people in process, open to be deconstructed and formed through our mutual learning experience.

As professor, it is my responsibility to empower each class member as a learner by treating each student with respect and dignity. I come to position myself as a fellow learner in the community and to offer information, reflection, experience and questions for us to reflect on together. Further, it is my responsibility to give good evaluation and feedback to your thinking, both as you offer it to the class in our discussions and through written work so that your growth through this class can be maximized, as a result of our collaboration.

As a responsible member of our learning community you will be expected to commit yourself to the class throughout the semester that we are together. This means that in our class interactions you will endeavor to treat all members of our class with respect and dignity. Your

participation is required as your presence is necessary for our community (that is our class) to function at an optimal level. Assignments should be handed in on time and in good order in an electronic (word is preferred, pdf's discouraged) document. All late assignments are subject to a penalty of 2% for each day (including weekends) that it is late.

I am not only available but also welcome and enjoy connections with each of you. We can meet on campus at a time that is convenient for both of us, or we can meet via skype or phone if coming to campus is not a possibility for you. If you would like to meet together please feel free to make an appointment with me for a time that works for both of us.!

Additional notes:

Academic Style- All assignments should conform to the specifications of the MDC style guide. https://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/sites/default/files/documents/mdc_styleguide.pdf (or go to MDC website, click on "Students" menu and on "resources" icon to find the style guide).

Books- Books can be ordered from READ ON books: phone—416-622-2934; fax: 416-622-2308; Email: books@readon.ca (READ ON will provide great service, usually for the most reasonable price available)

Academic Dishonesty – Academic dishonesty is a serious offence in the academic world that may take any number of forms, including plagiarism, the submission of work that is not one's own or for which previous credit has been obtained, and/or unauthorized collaboration with other students. Academic dishonesty can result in severe consequences, e.g., failure of the assignment, failure of the course, a notation on the transcript, and/or suspension or expulsion from the College. It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. Please refer to the McMaster Divinity College Statement on Academic Honesty located at www.macdiv.ca/regs/honesty.php.

Inclusive Language ~ McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language in worship services, student written materials, and all of its publications. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected. The NRSV is a good example of the use of inclusive language. It is expected that all students will use inclusive language in all MDC assignments.

Sexual Harassment ~ Sexual harassment is a violation of the integrity of persons in the form of unsolicited, unwelcome, verbal or physical behavior, which discriminates on the basis of gender about a person's body, attire, gender, marital status or economic status. Among faculty, staff, and students, sexual harassment of any kind will not be tolerated.

Disclaimer ~ This syllabus is the property of the instructor and is prepared with currently available information. The instructor reserves the right to make changes and revisions up until the first day of class.